Developer outlines downtown Menomonie plans

By Pamela Powers
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MENOMONIE — A developer proposing a housing unit and retail space at the former Leevers Foods site in downtown Menomonie said the goal is to attract working professional people to the site.

Broad Street Menomonie LLC is proposing a mixed-used residential and retail development at 503 Broadway St. The developer is seeking a planned unit development for the commercial site.

The 1.27-acre lot would include nine two-bedroom town homes on the south side of the building, and 30 one-bedroom apartments and 24 two-bedroom apartments in the upper levels.

"We’re hoping to get people who work in downtown or work at the university and want to live in an urban environment and close to restaurants," developer Brett Naylor told the Menomonie City Council Monday.

The building would have four stories totaling nearly 100,750 square feet. The first level would be retail space.

The one-bedroom units would have about 536 square feet of space and the two-bedroom about 1,000 square feet. Rent would be in the high $600s or low $700s for the one-bedroom apartments and $1,000 to $1,100 for the two-bedroom apartments.

There also would be a site for a 12,000-square-foot retail space on the 1.27 acre lot. Menomonie Market Food Co-op is negotiating for much of that site, and some would be office space.

Underground parking is proposed for the tenants and ground parking for the retail space.

The planned unit development for the site is headed to the city Plan Commission Monday, Aug. 27.

Naylor said he does not have a plan for the north side of the property. More housing could be developed if there is demand.
He noted that without the interest of Menomonie Market the project would have been difficult because retail space is required on the first level in the downtown. The market may take up about 6,500 square feet; it currently is about 1,900 square feet, including a lunch site. The market should be three times the current size given its business, said general manager Crystal Halvorson.

In 2011 a 250-bed mixed-use housing unit and retail space was planned on the site. That plan was approved by the Menomonie City Council but vetoed by Mayor Randy Knaack, who felt more discussion was needed on the proposal. The City Council later overturned the veto.

A lawsuit also was filed by a group of concerned citizens and the project was withdrawn, even though a judge determined the city had followed the law when it approved the project.

Documents filed with the city list Gateway Development of Eau Claire as the owner of the property pending approval of the project. When the Gateway project withdrew and the property reverted back to commercial from a planned unit development, it was announced Urban Land Development of Minneapolis acquired ownership interest in the property.